

Introduction to the Journal

Modern European intellectuals' obsession with the "New World"—broadly defined to include not only North America (the U.S., Mexico and Canada), but all of Latin America, the Caribbean, and indigenous cultures—lies at the heart of Surrealism. The actual and fantasized travel of these intellectuals to the New World, and the Surrealist Diaspora, are major chapters in modern intellectual and cultural history that resulted in epistemological shifts across numerous fields, including anthropology, psychoanalysis, literature and visual culture. The *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas* establishes a forum to research the prehistory and the relocation of Surrealism to the "New World," as well as its ongoing cultural and intellectual legacies. In Fall of 2006, the international conference *Surrealism and the American West* was convened at Arizona State University. This journal seeks to channel and continue the public and scholarly excitement that was generated at that conference.

The sustained engagement of European anthropologists, art historians, early psychoanalysis, and later the surrealist artists and poets—American and European—with Arizona, the Southwest, and the greater West was central to the notion of global modernity that came to be formed in the twentieth century. Inspired in part by Alexander von Humboldt's extensive travels throughout Central and South America in the early nineteenth century, the German anthropologist Franz Boas arrived in the U.S. to study Native American cultures of the Northwest Coast beginning in 1866 and as a result shaped the field of modern anthropology. German art historian of the Italian Renaissance, Aby Warburg, traveled to Arizona in 1896 to study and photograph the Pueblo Indians. French anthropologists shared this fascination with the New World, and the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss in particular brought the indigenous cultures of America to the center of French intellectual life.

The presence of exiled Surrealists in New York City during and immediately

after the Second World War and its impact on the American artists who eventually formed the New York School has been extensively documented. During the Second World War, Surrealist émigrés in New York devoted a significant amount of energy to the exploration of Native American art and culture, especially that of the Southwest and Northwest Coast. André Breton and Max Ernst joined fellow exile/émigré Claude Lévi-Strauss in the collection and promotion of Native American art. Kurt Seligmann and Wolfgang Paalen preceded them in collection and field visits to the Northwest Coast, just as Artaud had preceded Breton's visit to Mexico in 1938. By chance, Lévi-Strauss traveled to America on the same boat as Breton and the Cuban/French painter Wilfredo Lam. A survey of Surrealist art and literature from the '40s and '50s reveals intense fascination with Native American art and theories of "primitive" magic and myth. Many surrealists left New York and traveled west, while others spent their exile in Mexico and other parts of Latin America.

Discussion of surrealist activity in America has tended to center on New York during the early 1940s. One goal of this journal is to shift focus from New York to the American West, Mexico, the Caribbean and South America, and to explore the likelihood that the West, literally and figuratively, formed as much of a nexus of European/American/Native cultural exchange as did New York. Both Ernst and Salvador Dali made their way West, albeit for different reasons. Ernst and his wife, painter Dorothea Tanning, lived and worked for seven years in Sedona, Arizona, while Dali, and Man Ray and his wife Juliette, were drawn to Los Angeles and the Hollywood film industry.

Surrealist activity in Mexico was particularly intense. Upon seeing stray dogs that would be allowed to roam in and out of churches in Mexico City, Breton commented that Mexico was the only country in the world where dogs went to mass. Mexico's strong tradition in Surrealism was perhaps formally established with the International Surrealist Exhibition in Mexico City (1940). Not only European artists Kurt Seligmann, Wolfgang Paalen, Remedios Varo, and the American artist Leonora Carrington, but also European writers like Antonin Artaud and Breton, found an exoticized, mystical version of European surrealist ideals in Mexico. Mexican artists and writers—the famed painters Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera and numerous others—synthesized these tendencies in developing Mexican modernism. Breton traveled, with Lam, to Martinique, Haiti and Cuba in the '40s and '50s; and Benjamin Péret traveled to and lived for some years in Brazil.

The techniques of Surrealism continue to be mobilized to counter the colonialism that also characterized the European and American Surrealist presence in the New World. The visionary Victor Segalen and later Michel Leiris, another

poet-turned-ethnographer connected to surrealist circles in France, both became increasingly self-conscious about the inequalities of colonialism in their work. In fact, it is likely that post-structural anthropology's critique of the "master," discussed by James Clifford and others, largely owes its birth to Surrealism. Arguably the work of Michael Taussig connects with this critical tradition. *Les Maîtres Fous* (The Mad Masters, 1954), directed by Jean Rouch, explores how participants in ritual trances in Niger and Ghana come to reenact colonialist administrators, thereby managing the legacy of colonialist domination. This journal aspires to continue this critical and postcolonialist impulse within Surrealism.

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